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HIDDEN TRANSCRIPTS

(A LIFE SET EVENT)

OPEN

GREGORY RICHARDSON
IN CONVERSATION WITH
SHARELLY EMANUELSON

JANUARY 18: Sharelly Emanuelson [SE] - Gregory Richardson [GR]

Dear Gregory,

Konta? I am back for about more than a week now, and I am putting the live set event together for the exhibition, which I'm calling Hidden Transcripts. As you know Charissa will give a lecture during the event and I hope our e-mail conversation will also help the audience to get an idea of what I am dealing with in my work. I am excited and I feel that this collaboration is already reflecting a newer generation from the Dutch Caribbean academics, artists and intellectuals. And, o boy, do we need to start representing ourselves more!

In the exhibition, the autobiographical, fictional and documentary will all come together in one event. The setting is a colourful one with a festive atmosphere. There will be music and the public is invited to wear Carnival masks. In the space there will be several video projections containing archive material from, among other sources, footage relating to Caribbean protest actions in The Hague in 1969, the year that an act of revolution took place in Curacao. We see Betico Croes during his mission to gain more independence and our new King dancing Tumba in the middle of a Tumba festival when he was younger. During the event everything that happens in the exhibition space is being filmed as a kind of 'live set', turning those present into actors and becoming the basis from which a follow-up video work will be made.

I can tell you that the whole Zwarte Piet discussion was a tough one this year. I felt awful and still shocked, even if I anticipated it with the "tolerant" Dutch mentality that I noticed as soon as I arrived here eight years ago. When going through pictures of the past, I found one of me standing next to Sinterklaas and Zwarte Piet in Curacao. I can remember being so

excited and it being as much my tradition as from people here in the Netherlands. But I can remember my perspective towards Zwarte Piet changing from the first year I saw one here, because it was not a Dutch Caribbean person performing it, it was a Dutch white man.



You know the Caribbean is a special place and, if you ask me, it is much more developed when it comes to multicultural and plural societies. But in all my discomfort, I felt that the energy from the past where one could start a revolution to fight for what one truly believes in, or even for what is fair, is outdated. It cannot be performed again in the same way it was done in the 60's and 70's. I felt that if I liked I could march on the streets, yes, cause we have "freedom of speech" and then, the media would make a fool out of the act of demanding justice and that maybe in ten years we might have accomplished some minor change. But this potential minor change does not seem



convincing or satisfying enough to me. With this sense of hopelessness, I started thinking about my generation and tried to see if this lack of interest could be found there, but it also made me think of back home, where things can go wrong and we still celebrate life like there was no tomorrow. Probably one of the reasons for us not to grow madder and madder by the day. In reading all the literature that I am engaging with at the moment, I found James Scott mentioning the following about the concept of "hidden transcript":

[T]o describe the open, public interactions between dominators and oppressed and the term 'hidden transcript' for the critique of power that goes on offstage, which power holders do not see or hear. Different systems of domination, including political, economic, cultural or religious, have aspects that are not heard that go along with their public dimensions. In order to study the systems of domination, careful attention is paid to what lies beneath the surface of evident, public

behavior. In public, those that are oppressed accept their domination, but they always question their domination offstage.

As Caribbean's we can dance around, move in and out of these public and offstage interactions. We have more than one language for this and I find the art of resistance and survival very interesting.

Taking a closer look at our carnival, I see it as place where a lot of resistance towards authority takes place, and racial, gender and class boundaries are questioned or even broken. So Bakhtin's 'A world upside down' is so recognizable.

I have to go finish some crowns I am making for the event. Looking forward to your first reply.

JAN 22: GR - SE

Greetings Sharelly, Blessings to you and your loved ones and to see all the good



things you are busy with, trying to give our people voice. It's good to hear from you after we worked together in Aruba on the calypso thing. I got some positive feedback and the calypsonians were referring to the meeting in other settings. Next week I will do another lecture/discussion on calypso at IPA for the general public. I will share an article on calypso and resistance. Jammer that I cannot get enough sponsors for the book. It's really difficult. But jaa...

Going back to your project, the truth is, Caribbean people have been blessed with many talents by the universe, but it's often, I believe NOT acknowledged, and if it is acknowledged it is placed within a specific context. I think our ability to live in a Creole space like the Caribbean where bits and pieces of histories, complexions, languages, cultures, people(s), religions and so forth in a synergetic type way creates its own thing but yet not taking anything away... gives us the ability to deal with diversity in a unique way. Multilingualism, multiculturalism and multi identification is embraced, despite the hick ups that every society has.

I think carnival best represents that creole space with the best and worst of our human characters are mixed up in one. So jaaa... Just keep on doing your thing according to the talents you have been blessed with as a gift to humanity. Great that Charissa is also on board. She is masterful at what she does. Just to think I knew her as a young girl playing the pan in church. Great or not! Boy, I also know the feeling of wanting to go back in time. To be honest I sometimes wish I was alive in the 60's and 70's. Just imagine we could participate in marches, freedom rides, in sit-ins, listen to music that meant something. I guess that is why everyone always kept telling me that I was an old soul. Maybe I am glamorizing the past too much, but nowadays, with the FB thing and all, is like ...what is hot today? And then... move on to the next topic without making a true difference. Maar goed, nos tin cu cuminsa un caminda toch... Kende cu bo por ta y unda bo por ta! On the Zwarte Piet thing... stay true to what you believe in, don't give up! Blessed regards.

JAN 25: SE - GR
Hi Gregory,

The creole space is one of the things that I am referring to on the 31st. The audience will have the possibility to experience another (more hidden) side of our reality in this Kingdom.

I just arranged DJ Shiomi Richardson from Curacao (family perhaps?) who will

be playing for the night. I am so happy I found him. Even though we have a few Antillean and Aruban DJs that play Tumba, Calypso and so on, most of them are playing at the J'ouvert Morning party up in Rotterdam on the same night. So on the 31 first there will be several creole spaces in action. Diaspora in the metropole :).

Yesterday I was searching all over the place for a video of Willem Alexander dancing in the middle of a group at the Tumba Festival in Curacao, so I can use it at the event. Finally I found it on the website of Nos Tesoro, the quality is not the best but I will do my best to use it. On the Nos Tesoro page many old clips are being posted with songs and music bands performing. You know that for the last 3 years or so I have noticed more and more Facebook pages where people reminisce about the good old days. Have a look:



Today we are building a podium for the Prince, Pancho and Queens so they can stand on it during the event.

JAN 31: GR - SE

Hi Sharelly, what's up. Sorry for the late reply. I've been busy with a deadline and some work for the job. DJ Shiomi Richardson, as family, wie weet, yuh already know how the islands are. Maybe some place some where down the line. We are connected anyway by the Most High, the way I see it. What is interesting about creole spaces is that transcends physical space, as in not only Caribbean, Africa, Europe, Asia, America and all their attributes etc., but all of these things coming together at the same time. No more box thinking. The Idea of the prince, now king, dancing Tumba is a beautiful thing as he gets to experience the freeing up of his body, in a warm space, away from the cold, specifically through waist movements and the letting loose of the arms, to the rhythms of the

drum, even if it is for a few seconds. If he does that some place else he is seen as weird... Normaal gesproken, as royalty you have to be reserved etc, but during the Tumba he could actually really be himself. Maybe that's why his Latin flavor Ha Ha ... the creole space does not respect class, race, gender, sexual orientation, language etc. A whole other set of rules apply, in this case, how could you swing.

Jouvert Morning is one such space in Aruba, where during the wee hours in the morning, Arubans of all backgrounds take to the streets in nightgowns, baby dolls, pajamas, with toilet bowl covers, kitchen pots and pans, car rims etc and jam, dance to the Roadmarch tunes until the sun rises. So when you come to Aruba make sure you experience that. That they doing those types of parties in Holland nowadays is new to me.... I see the transcendence of locality. I guess the Dutch on main continent get to see how it is done island style. Great noh!

Trouwens did you check the FB page from people from Aruba, living in San Nicolas, I think its called, Yuh from San Nicolas if yuh... On there they also posted all types of memories, clips, stories, pics etc about growing up in this district. Actually, spontaneous oral history collections in action.

On the prins and pancho thing and the carnival queen thing is also cool. In the south of the Netherlands they also have such characters with similar traits. The Caribbean has creolized it to their liking.

Again, what you are doing is awesome, keep up the good work; I think there is much more in store.

JAN 29: SE - GR

Hey Gregory no compliments just yet, I'm just doing what I see as my responsibility.

In Holland they are having jouvert morning parties for some years now. I went to the one last year, it was wotless! If you even look at the rest of Europe Carnival and Soca events are becoming big in Germany too.

I became a member of those FB pages it seems like every island has a few of those sites. I am also a member of the one from San Nicolas. And indeed like you said, it is spontaneous oral history in action. But we need to start documenting our ways better so while we are working towards that. I hope that others will join.



Friday is around the corner and tomorrow I will start the build-up in the space. I am nervous but also excited. I have no idea how many people will show up, but I am hoping at least between 70 and 100 people. Then the space will be full. The filming will happen in a documentary style, so something good will definitely come out of the footage. I am still short on a male queen but I hope to get a volunteer on time.

Today I started the build-up process at 1646 gallery. I am using the biggest amount of beamers ever used at the same time. I think this will be the last mail from me to you. Because I have to finish everything tomorrow! Even though it was a short correspondence, I think we gave the readers some more info of what could make them curious about what it is like at the other side of our Kingdom. Lets talk soon after the event to continue the collaboration.

JAN 30: GR - SE
Con bay Sharelly,

I finally got a chance to sit behind my laptop. I was to mail you last night but I got home late. We had a presentation on calypso and meaning at the IPA teacher training college. This I did together with former calypso infantil/hubenil winner, Mighty Heads. His real name is Kenny Meyers, a schoolteacher who is also interested in this stuff. The turnout was pretty good. I saw some new faces and we got lots of new info. The discussions were also terrific. This session was similar to that of Bonaire Bar in San Nicolas, we organized together with Charissa but this time for the general public. I told them about you and your project of documentation of the art form within and without the context of carnival. They thought it was great. They will be also officially documenting Calypso of Aruba on the Unesco intangible heritage list. At least they will attempt to.

It's great that you will be here in Aruba in February to document this stuff live. I think your project will be a success. Whether one person comes or a hundred, the show must go on. As long as you present what is true to your heart and true to the gifts that have been bestowed on you by the universe. When we do that, all else falls in to place. Like the rappers always say "keep it real" Bo mes sa.

Hopi exito, and looking forward to the next project on this side of the ocean.

Blessed regards

Greg R



ABOUT THIS FOLDER.

Anybody invited to realize a project in 1646 is asked to engage in conversation with a previously unknown correspondent.

This conversation takes place via e-mail and stretches through the whole period during which the artists develop their initial idea into final results. 1646 invites the correspondent at the other end of this contact to figure his/her way through this actual process.

In trying to picture what result the artists' work is going to, such exchange can become a reflection on the amount of otherwise untraceable choices of the moment which make up to the artists' practice.

This issue is part of the exhibition by Sharelly Emanuelson, *Hidden Transcripts (a Life set Event)*, January 31 2014 in 1646. The exhibition is part of *The Ongoing Conversation* series, a collaboration between 1646 and the Master Artistic Research, The Hague.

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